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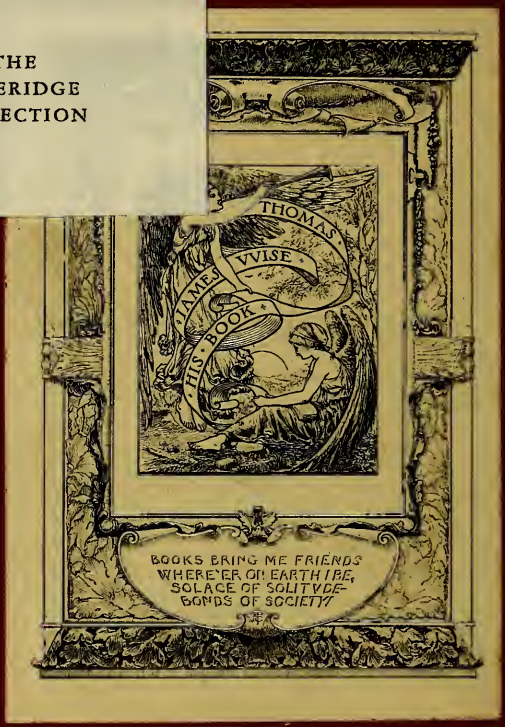

COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR (1772–1834)

Poet and Philosopher

357 THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE: an Historic Drama. *Cambridge: Printed by Benjamin Flower for W. H. Lunn and J. & J. Merrill; and sold by J. March, Norwich*, 1794.

First Edition, full dark green crushed levant morocco, 8vo. £105

Coleridge's very rare first book. This copy has not the leaf of advertisements at the end. One act of the play was written by Southey.

Note

This copy of "The Fall of Robespierre", Coleridge's first book, was bought by me from my old friend Colonel Prideaux in or about the year 1884. It is a curious fact connected with it that although other copies of the drama came into the market at various times, all were more or less in a dirty or damaged condition, and many years passed before I was able to replace my first copy with one in mint state. This is the main reason why the recorded prices attached to the pamphlet appear to be surprisingly low. I don't think that I have ever seen more

than 3 or 4 copies in really decent-
state during my long experience as
a Collector of Coleridgeiana. Now that
Coleridge is at long last coming into
his own, it is impossible even to guess
what the price
would be really fine copy such as this would
command. It would certainly be a
high one.

Thos. J. Wise.

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THE

FALL

OF

ROBESPIERRE.

AN

HISTORIC DRAMA.

BY S. T. COLERIDGE,

OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Cambridge:

PRINTED BY BENJAMIN FLOWER,

FOR W. H. LUNN, AND J. AND J. MERRILL; AND SOLD BY J. MARCH, NORWICH.

1794.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

TO

H. MARTIN, Esq.

OF

JESUS COLLEGE,

CAMBRIDGE.

DEAR SIR,

ACCEPT, as a small testimony of my grateful attachment, the following Dramatic Poem, in which I have endeavoured to detail, in an interesting form, the fall of a man, whose great bad actions have cast a disastrous lustre on his name. In the execution of the work, as intricacy of plot could not have been attempted without a gross violation of recent facts, it has been my sole aim to imitate the empassioned and highly figurative language of the French Orators, and to develope the characters of the chief actors on a vast stage of horrors.

Yours fraternally,

S. T. COLERIDGE.

Jesus College,
September 22, 1794.

THE
FALL OF ROBESPIERRE.

ACT I.

SCENE, The Thuilleries.

BARRERE.

THE tempeſt gathers—be it mine to ſeek
A friendly ſhelter, ere it burſts upon him.
But where? and how? I fear the Tyrant's *ſoul*—
Sudden in action, fertile in reſource,
And riſing awful 'mid impending ruins;
In ſplendor gloomy, as the midnight meteor,
That fearleſs thwarts the elemental war.
When laſt in ſecret conference we met,
He ſcowl'd upon me with ſuſpicious rage,
Making his eye the inmate of my boſom.
I know he ſcorns me—and I feel, I hate him—
Yet there is in him that which makes me tremble!
(Exit.)

Enter TALLIEN *and* LEGENDRE.

TALLIEN.

It was Barrere, Legendre! didſt thou mark him?
Abrupt he turn'd, yet linger'd as he went,
And towards us caſt a look of doubtful meaning.

LEGENDRE.

I mark'd him well. I met his eye's laſt glance;
It menac'd not ſo proudly as of yore.
Methought he would have ſpoke—but that he dar'd not—
Such agitation darken'd on his brow.

TALLIEN.

'Twas all-diſtruſting guilt that kept from burſting
Th' impriſon'd ſecret ſtruggling in the face:
E'en as the ſudden breeze upſtarting onwards
Hurries the thunder cloud, that pois'd awhile
Hung in mid air, red with its mutinous burthen.

LEGENDRE.

Perfidious Traitor!—ſtill afraid to baſk
In the full blaze of power, the ruſtling ſerpent
Lurks in the thicket of the Tyrant's greatneſs,
Ever prepar'd to ſting who ſhelters him.
Each thought, each action in himſelf converges;
And love and friendſhip on his coward heart
Shine like the powerleſs ſun on polar ice:
To all attach'd, by turns deſerting all,
Cunning and dark—a neceſſary villain!

TALLIEN.

Yet much depends upon him—well you know
With plauſible harangue 'tis his to paint
Defeat like victory—and blind the mob
With truth-mix'd falſhood. They led on by him,
And wild of head to work their own deſtruction,
Support with uproar what he plans in darkneſs.

LEGENDRE.

O what a precious name is Liberty
To ſcare or cheat the ſimple into ſlaves!
Yes—we muſt gain him over: by dark hints
We'll ſhew enough to rouſe his watchful fears,
Till the cold coward blaze a patriot.
O Danton! murder'd friend! aſſiſt my counſels—
Hover around me on ſad memory's wings,
And pour thy daring vengeance in my heart.
Tallien! if but to-morrow's fateful ſun
Beholds the Tyrant living—we are dead!

TALLIEN.

Yet his keen eye that flashes mighty meanings—

LEGENDRE.

Fear not—or rather fear th' alternative,
And seek for courage e'en in cowardice——
But see—hither he comes—let us away!
His brother with him, and the bloody Couthon,
And high of haughty spirit, young St. Just.

(Exeunt.)

Enter ROBESPIERRE, COUTHON, ST. JUST, *and* ROBESPIERRE, *Junior.*

ROBESPIERRE.

What? did La Fayette fall before my power?
And did I conquer Roland's spotless virtues?
The fervent eloquence of Vergniaud's tongue?
And Brissot's thoughtful soul unbribed and bold?
Did zealot armies haste in vain to save them?
What! did th' assassin's dagger aim its point
Vain, as a *dream* of murder, at my bosom?
And shall I dread the soft luxurious Tallien?
Th' Adonis Tallien? banquet-hunting Tallien?
Him, whose heart flutters at the dice-box? Him,
Who ever on the harlots' downy pillow
Resigns his head impure to feverish slumbers!

ST. JUST.

I cannot fear him—yet we must not scorn him.
Was it not Antony that conquer'd Brutus,
Th' Adonis, banquet-hunting Antony?
The state is not yet purified: and though
The stream runs clear, yet at the bottom lies
The thick black sediment of all the factions—
It needs no magic hand to stir it up!

COUTHON.

O we did wrong to ſpare them—fatal error!
Why lived Legendre, when that Danton died?
And Collot d'Herbois dangerous in crimes?
I've fear'd him, ſince his iron heart endured
To make of Lyons one vaſt human ſhambles,
Compar'd with which the ſun-ſcorcht wilderneſs
Of Zara, were a ſmiling paradiſe.

ST. JUST.

Rightly thou judgeſt, Couthon! He is one,
Who flies from ſilent ſolitary anguiſh,
Seeking forgetful peace amid the jar
Of elements. The howl of maniac uproar
Lulls to ſad ſleep the memory of himſelf.
A calm is fatal to him—then he feels
The dire upboilings of the ſtorm within him.
A tyger mad with inward wounds!——I dread
The fierce and reſtleſs turbulence of guilt.

ROBESPIERRE.

Is not the commune ours? The ſtern tribunal?
Dumas? and Vivier? Fleuriot? and Louvet?
And Henriot? We'll denounce an hundred, nor
Shall they behold to-morrow's ſun roll weſtward.

ROBESPIERRE, Junior.

Nay—I am ſick of blood; my aching heart
Reviews the long, long train of hideous horrors
That ſtill have gloom'd the riſe of the republic.
I ſhould have died before Toulon, when war
Became the patriot!

ROBESPIERRE.

Moſt unworthy wiſh!
He, whoſe heart ſickens at the blood of traitors
Would be himſelf a traitor, were he not

A coward! 'Tis congenial ſouls alone
Shed tears of ſorrow for each other's fate.
O thou art brave, my brother! and thine eye
Full firmly ſhines amid the groaning battle—
Yet in thine heart the woman-form of pity
Aſſerts too large a ſhare, an ill-timed gueſt!
There is unſoundneſs in the ſtate—To-morrow
Shall ſee it cleans'd by wholeſome maſſacre!

ROBESPIERRE, Junior.

Beware! already do the ſections murmur—
"O the great glorious patriot, Robeſpierre—
"The *tyrant guardian* of the country's *freedom!*"

COUTHON.

Twere folly ſure to work great deeds by halves!
Much I ſuſpect the darkſome fickle heart
Of cold Barrere!

ROBESPIERRE.

I ſee the villain in him!

ROBESPIERRE, Junior.

If he—if all forſake thee—what remains?

ROBESPIERRE.

Myſelf! the ſteel-ſtrong Rectitude of ſoul
And Poverty ſublime 'mid circling virtues!
The giant Victories, my counſels form'd,
Shall ſtalk around me with ſun-glittering plumes,
Bidding the darts of calumny fall pointleſs.

(*Exeunt cæteri. Manet* Couthon.)

COUTHON *ſolus.*

So we deceive ourſelves! What goodly virtues
Bloom on the poiſonous branches of ambition!
Still, Robeſpierre! thou'l't guard thy country's freedom

To deſpotize in all the patriot's pomp.
While Conſcience, 'mid the mob's applauding clamours,
Sleeps in thine ear, nor whiſpers—blood-ſtain'd tyrant!
Yet what is Conſcience? Superſtition's dream,
Making ſuch deep impreſſion on our ſleep—
That long th' awaken'd breaſt retains its horrors!
But he returns—and with him comes Barrere.

(*Exit*, Couthon.)

Enter ROBESPIERRE *and* BARRERE.

ROBESPIERRE.

There is no danger but in cowardice.—
Barrere! we *make* the danger, when we *fear* it.
We have ſuch force without, as will ſuſpend
The cold and trembling treachery of theſe members.

BARRERE.

'Twill be a pauſe of terror.—

ROBESPIERRE.

But to whom?
Rather the ſhort-lived ſlumber of the tempeſt,
Gathering its ſtrength anew. The daſtard traitors!
Moles, that would undermine the rooted oak!
A pauſe!—a *moment's* pauſe?—'Tis all *their life.*

BARRERE.

Yet much they talk—and plauſible their ſpeech.
Couthon's decree has given ſuch powers, that

ROBESPIERRE.

That what?

BARRERE.

The freedom of debate—

ROBESPIERRE.

Tranſparent maſk!
They wiſh to clog the wheels of government,
Forcing the hand that guides the vaſt machine
To bribe them to their duty—*Engliſh* patriots!
Are not the congregated clouds of war
Black all around us? In our very vitals
Works not the king-bred poiſon of rebellion?
Say, what ſhall counteract the ſelfiſh plottings
Of wretches, cold of heart, nor awed by fears
Of him, whoſe power directs th' eternal juſtice?
Terror? or ſecret-ſapping gold? The firſt
Heavy, but tranſient as the ills that cauſe it;
And to the virtuous patriot rendered light
By the neceſſities that gave it birth:
The other fouls the fount of the republic,
Making it flow polluted to all ages:
Inoculates the ſtate with a ſlow venom,
That once imbibed, muſt be continued ever.
Myſelf incorruptible I ne'er could bribe them—
Therefore they hate me.

BARRERE.

Are the ſections friendly?

ROBESPIERRE.

There are who wiſh my ruin—but I'll make them
Bluſh for the crime in blood!

BARRERE.

Nay—but I tell thee,
Thou art too fond of ſlaughter—and the right
(If right it be) workeſt by moſt foul means!

ROBESPIERRE.

Self-centering Fear! how well thou canſt ape *Mercy!*
Too fond of ſlaughter!—matchleſs hypocrite!

Thought Barrere ſo, when Briſſot, Danton died?
Thought Barrere ſo, when through the ſtreaming ſtreets
Of Paris red-eyed Maſſacre o'er wearied
Reel'd heavily, intoxicate with blood?
And when (O heavens!) in Lyons' death-red ſquare
Sick fancy groan'd o'er putrid hills of ſlain,
Didſt thou not fiercely laugh, and bleſs the day?
Why, thou haſt been the mouth-piece of all horrors,
And, like a blood-hound, crouch'd for murder! Now
Aloof thou ſtandeſt from the tottering pillar,
Or, like a frighted child behind its mother,
Hideſt thy pale face in the ſkirts of—*Mercy!*

BARRERE.

O prodigality of eloquent anger!
Why now I ſee thou'rt weak—thy caſe is deſperate!
The cool ferocious Robeſpierre turn'd ſcolder!

ROBESPIERRE.

Who from a bad man's boſom wards the blow
Reſerves the whetted dagger for his own.
Denounced twice—and twice I ſaved his life!

(Exit.)

BARRERE.

The ſections will ſupport then—there's the point!
No! he can never weather out the ſtorm—
Yet he is ſudden in revenge—No more!
I muſt away to Tallien.

(Exit.)

SCENE changes to the houſe of ADELAIDE.

ADELAIDE *enters, ſpeaking to a ſervant.*

ADELAIDE.

Didſt thou preſent the letter that I gave thee?

Did Tallien anſwer, he would ſoon return?

SERVANT.

He is in the Thuilleries—with him Legendre—
In deep diſcourſe they ſeem'd; as I approach'd
He waved his hand as bidding me retire:
I did not interrupt him. *(Returns the letter.)*

ADELAIDE.

Thou didſt rightly.

(Exit. Servant.)

O this new freedom! at how dear a price
We've bought the ſeeming good! The peaceful virtues
And every blandiſhment of private life,
The father's cares, the mother's fond endearment,
All ſacrificed to liberty's wild riot.
The winged hours, that ſcatter'd roſes round me,
Languid and ſad drag their ſlow courſe along,
And ſhake big gall-drops from their heavy wings.
But I will ſteal away theſe anxious thoughts
By the ſoft languiſhment of warbled airs,
If haply melodies may lull the ſenſe
Of ſorrow for a while.

SOFT MUSIC.

Enter TALLIEN.

TALLIEN.

Muſic, my love? O breathe again that air!
Soft nurſe of pain, it ſooths the weary ſoul
Of care, ſweet as the whiſper'd breeze of evening
That plays around the ſick man's throbbing temples.

SONG.

Tell me, on what holy ground
May domeſtic peace be found?

Halcyon daughter of the ſkies,
Far on fearful wing ſhe flies,
From the pomp of ſcepter'd ſtate,
From the rebel's noiſy hate.

In a cottag'd vale ſhe dwells
Liſt'ning to the Sabbath bells!
Still around her ſteps are ſeen,
Spotleſs honor's meeker mein,
Love, the ſire of pleaſing fears,
Sorrow ſmiling through her tears,
And conſcious of the paſt employ,
Memory, boſom-ſpring of joy.

TALLIEN.

I thank thee, Adelaide! 'twas ſweet, though mournful.
But why thy brow o'ercaſt, thy cheek ſo wan?
Thou look'ſt as a lorn maid beſide ſome ſtream
That ſighs away the ſoul in fond deſpairing,
While ſorrow ſad, like the dank willow near her,
Hangs o'er the troubled fountain of her eye.

ADELAIDE.

Ah! rather let me aſk what myſtery lowers
On Tallien's darken'd brow. Thou doſt me wrong—
Thy ſoul diſtemper'd, can my heart be tranquil?

TALLIEN.

Tell me, by whom thy brother's blood was ſpilt?
Aſks he not vengeance on theſe patriot murderers?
It has been born too tamely. Fears and curſes
Groan on our midnight beds, and e'en our dreams
Threaten the aſſaſſin hand of Robeſpierre.
He dies!—nor has the plot eſcaped his fears.

ADELAIDE.

Yet—yet—be cautious! much I fear the Commune—

The tyrant's creatures, and their fate with his
Faſt link'd in cloſe indiſſoluble union.
The pale Convention—

TALLIEN.

Hate him as they fear him,
Impatient of the chain, reſolv'd and ready.

ADELAIDE.

Th' enthuſiaſt mob, confuſion's lawleſs ſons—

TALLIEN.

They are aweary of his ſtern morality,
The fair-maſk'd offspring of ferocious pride.
The ſections too ſupport the delegates:
All—all is ours! e'en now the vital air
Of Liberty, condens'd awhile, is burſting
(Force irreſiſtable!) from its compreſſure—
To ſhatter the arch chemiſt in the exploſion!

Enter BILLAUD VARENNES *and* BOURDON L'OISE.

(Adelaide retires.)

BOURDON L'OISE.

Tallien! was this a time for amorous conference?
Henriot, the tyrant's moſt devoted creature,
Marſhals the force of Paris: The fierce club,
With Vivier at their head, in loud acclaim
Have ſworn to make the guillotine in blood
Float on the ſcaffold.—But who comes here?

Enter BARRERE *abruptly.*

BARRERE.

Say, are ye friends to freedom? *I am her's!*
Let us, forgetful of all common feuds,

Rally around her ſhrine! E'en now the tyrant
Concerts a plan of inſtant maſſacre!

BILLAUD VARENNES.

Away to the Convention! with that voice
So oft the herald of glad victory,
Rouſe their fallen ſpirits, thunder in their ears
The names of tyrant, plunderer, aſſaſſin!
The violent workings of my ſoul within
Anticipate the monſter's blood!

(Cry from the ſtreet of—No Tyrant! Down with the Tyrant!)

TALLIEN.

Hear ye that outcry?—If the trembling members
Even for a moment hold his fate ſuſpended,
I ſwear by the holy poniard, that ſtabbed Cæſar,
This dagger probes his heart!

(Exeunt omnes.)

ACT II.

SCENE, The Convention.

ROBESPIERRE *mounts the Tribune.*

Once more befits it that the voice of truth,
Fearleſs in innocence, though leagerd round
By envy and her hateful brood of hell,
Be heard amid this hall; once more befits
The patriot, whoſe prophetic eye ſo oft
Has pierced thro' faction's veil, to flaſh on crimes
Of deadlieſt import. Mouldering in the grave
Sleeps Capet's caitiff corſe; my daring hand
Levelled to earth his blood-cemented throne,

My voice declared his guilt, and ſtirred up France
To call for vengeance. I too dug the grave
Where ſleep the Girondiſts, deteſted band!
Long with the ſhew of freedom they abuſed
Her ardent ſons. Long time the well-turn'd phraſe
The high fraught ſentence and the lofty tone
Of declamation thunder'd in this hall,
Till reaſon midſt a labyrinth of words
Perplex'd, in ſilence ſeem'd to yield aſſent.
I durſt oppoſe. Soul of my honoured friend,
Spirit of Marat upon thee I call—
Thou know'ſt me faithful, know'ſt with what warm zeal
I urg'd the cauſe of juſtice, ſtripp'd the maſk
From factions deadly viſage, and deſtroy'd
Her traitor brood. Whoſe patriot arm hurl'd down
Hebert and Rouſin, and the villain friends
Of Danton, foul apoſtate! thoſe, who long
Maſk'd treaſon's form in liberty's fair garb,
Long deluged France with blood, and durſt defy
Omnipotence! but I it ſeems am falſe!
I am a traitor too! I—Robeſpierre!
I—at whoſe name the daſtard deſpot brood
Look pale with fear, and call on ſaints to help them!
Who dares accuſe me? who ſhall dare belie
My ſpotleſs name? Speak, ye accomplice band,
Of what am I accus'd? of what ſtrange crime
Is Maximilian Robeſpierre accus'd,
That through this hall the buz of diſcontent
Should murmur? who ſhall ſpeak?

BILLAUD VARENNES.

O patriot tongue
Belying the foul heart! Who was it urg'd
Friendly to tyrants that accurſt decree,
Whoſe influence brooding o'er this hallowed hall,
Has chill'd each tongue to ſilence. Who deſtroyed
The freedom of debate, and carried through

The fatal law, that doom'd the delegates,
Unheard before their equals, to the bar
Where cruelty ſat throned, and murder reign'd
With her Dumas coequal? Say—thou man
Of mighty eloquence, whoſe law was that?

COUTHON.

That law was mine. I urged it—I propos'd—
The voice of France aſſembled in her ſons
Aſſented, though the tame and timid voice
Of traitors murmur'd. I advis'd that law—
I juſtify it. It was wiſe and good.

BARRERE.

Oh, wonderous wiſe and moſt convenient too!
I have long mark'd thee, Robeſpierre—and now
Proclaim thee traitor—tyrant!

(Loud applauſes.)

ROBESPIERRE.

It is well.
I am a traitor! oh, that I had fallen
When Regnault lifted high the murderous knife,
Regnault the inſtrument belike of thoſe
Who now themſelves would fain aſſaſſinate,
And legalize their murders. I ſtand here
An iſolated patriot—hemmed around
By factions noiſy pack; beſet and bay'd
By the foul hell-hounds who know no eſcape
From juſtice' outſtretch'd arm, but by the force
That pierces through her breaſt.

(Murmurs, and ſhouts of—Down with the tyrant!)

ROBESPIERRE.

Nay, but I will be heard. There was a time
When Robeſpierre began, the loud applauſes
Of honeſt patriots drown'd the honeſt ſound.

But times are chang'd, and villainy prevails.

COLLOT D'HERBOIS.

No—villainy ſhall fall. France could not brook
A monarch's ſway—ſounds the dictator's name
More ſoothing to her ear?

BOURDON L'OISE.

Rattle her chains
More muſically now than when the hand
Of Briſſot forged her fetters; or the crew
Of Hebert thundered out their blaſphemies,
And Danton talk'd of virtue?

ROBESPIERRE.

Oh, that Briſſot
Were here again to thunder in this hall.
That Hebert lived, and Danton's giant form
Scowl'd once again defiance! ſo my ſoul
Might cope with worthy foes.
People of France
Hear me! Beneath the vengeance of the law,
Traitors have periſh'd countleſs; more ſurvive:
The hydra-headed faction lifts anew
Her daring front, and fruitful from her wounds,
Cautious from paſt defects, contrives new wiles
Againſt the ſons of Freedom.

TALLIEN.

Freedom lives!
Oppreſſion falls—for France has felt her chains,
Has burſt them too. Who traitor-like ſtept forth
Amid the hall of Jacobines to ſave
Camille Deſmoulines, and the venal wretch
D'Eglantine?

ROBESPIERRE.

I did—for I thought them honeſt.
And Heaven foreſend that vengeance ere ſhould ſtrike,
Ere juſtice doom'd the blow.

BARRERE.

Traitor, thou didſt.
Yes, the accomplice of their dark deſigns,
Awhile didſt thou defend them, when the ſtorm
Lower'd at ſafe diſtance. When the clouds frown'd darker,
Fear'd for yourſelf and left them to their fate.
Oh, I have mark'd thee long, and through the veil
Seen thy foul projects. Yes, ambitious man,
Self-will'd dictator o'er the realm of France,
The vengeance thou hait plann'd for patriots,
Falls on thy head. Look how thy brother's deeds
Diſhonour thine! He the firm patriot,
Thou the foul parricide of Liberty!

ROBESPIERRE, Junior.

Barrere—attempt not meanly to divide
Me from my brother. I partake his guilt,
For I partake his virtue.

ROBESPIERRE.

Brother, by my ſoul,
More dear I hold thee to my heart, that thus
With me thou dar'ſt to tread the dangerous path
Of virtue, than that nature twined her cords
Of kindred round us.

BARRERE.

Yes, allied in guilt,
Even as in blood ye are. Oh, thou worſt wretch,
Thou worſe than Sylla! haſt thou not proſcrib'd
Yea, in moſt foul anticipation ſlaughter'd
Each patriot repreſentative of France?

BOURDON L'OISE.

Was not the younger Cæsar too to reign
O'er all our valiant armies in the south,
And still continue there his merchant wiles?

ROBESPIERRE, Junior.

His merchant wiles! Oh, grant me patience, heaven!
Was it by merchant wiles I gain'd you back
Toulon, when proudly on her captive towers
Wav'd high the English flag? or fought I then
With merchant wiles, when sword in hand I led
Your troops to conquest? fought I merchant like,
Or barter'd I for victory, when death
Strode o'er the reeking streets with giant stride,
And shook his ebon plumes, and sternly smil'd
Amid the bloody banquet? when appal'd
The hireling sons of England spread the sail
Of safety, fought I like a merchant then?
Oh, patience! patience!

BOURDON L'OISE.

How this younger tyrant
Mouths out defiance to us! even so
He had led on the armies of the south,
Till once again the plains of France were drench'd
With her best blood.

COLLOT D'HERBOIS.

Till once again display'd
Lyons' sad tragedy had call'd me forth
The minister of wrath, whilst slaughter by
Had bathed in human blood.

DUBOIS CRANCE.

No wonder, friend,
That we are traitors—that our heads must fall
Beneath the axe of death! when Cæsar-like

Reigns Robeſpierre, 'tis wiſely done to doom
The fall of Brutus. Tell me, bloody man,
Haſt thou not parcell'd out deluded France
As it had been ſome province won in fight
Between your curſt triumvirate. You, Couthon,
Go with my brother to the ſouthern plains;
St. Juſt, be yours the army of the north;
Mean time I rule at Paris.

ROBESPIERRE.

Matchleſs knave!
What—not one bluſh of conſcience on thy cheek—
Not one poor bluſh of truth! moſt likely tale!
That I who ruined Briſſot's towering hopes,
I who diſcovered Hebert's impious wiles,
And ſharp'd for Danton's recreant neck the axe,
Should now be traitor! had I been ſo minded,
Think ye I had deſtroyed the very men
Whoſe plots reſembled mine? bring forth your proofs
Of this deep treaſon. Tell me in whoſe breaſt
Found ye the fatal ſcroll? or tell me rather
Who forg'd the ſhameleſs falſhood?

COLLOT D'HERBOIS.

Aſk you proofs?
Robeſpierre, what proofs were aſk'd when Briſſot died?

LEGENDRE.

What proofs adduced you when the Danton died?
When at the imminent peril of my life
I roſe, and fearleſs of thy frowning brow,
Proclaim'd him guiltleſs?

ROBESPIERRE.

I remember well
The fatal day. I do repent me much
That I kill'd Cæſar and ſpar'd Antony.

But I have been too lenient. I have ſpar'd
The ſtream of blood, and now my own muſt flow
To fill the current.

(Loud applauſes.)

Triumph not too ſoon,
Juſtice may yet be victor.

Enter St. Just, *and mounts the Tribune.*

St. Just.

I come from the committee—charged to ſpeak
Of matters of high import. I omit
Their orders. Repreſentatives of France,
Boldly in his own perſon ſpeaks St. Juſt
What his own heart ſhall dictate.

Tallien.

Hear ye this,
Inſulted delegates of France? St. Juſt
From your committee comes—comes charg'd to ſpeak
Of matters of high import—yet omits
Their orders! Repreſentatives of France,
That bold man I denounce, who diſobeys
The nations orders.—I denounce St. Juſt.

(Loud applauſes.)

St. Just.

Hear me!

(Violent murmurs.)

Robespierre.

He ſhall be heard!

Burdon l'Oise.

Muſt we contaminate this ſacred hall
With the foul breath of treaſon?

COLLOT D'HERBOIS.

Drag him away!
Hence with him to the bar.

COUTHON.

Oh, juſt proceedings!
Robeſpierre prevented liberty of ſpeech—
And Robeſpierre is a tyrant! Tallien reigns,
He dreads to hear the voice of innocence—
And St. Juſt muſt be ſilent!

LEGENDRE.

Heed we well
That juſtice guide our actions. No light import
Attends this day. I move St. Juſt be heard.

FRERON.

Inviolate be the ſacred right of man,
The freedom of debate.

(Violent applauſes.)

ST. JUST.

I may be heard then! much the times are chang'd,
When St. Juſt thanks this hall for hearing him.
Robeſpierre is call'd a tyrant. Men of France
Judge not too ſoon. By popular diſcontent
Was Ariſtides driven into exile,
Was Phocion murder'd? Ere ye dare pronounce
Robeſpierre is guilty, it befits ye well,
Conſider who accuſe him. Tallien,
Bourdon of Oiſe—the very men denounced,
For that their dark intrigues diſturb'd the plan
Of government. Legendre the ſworn friend
Of Danton fall'n apoſtate. Dubois Crance,
He who at Lyons ſpar'd the royaliſts—
Collot d'Herbois—

BOURDON L'OISE.

What—ſhall the traitor rear
His head amid our tribune—and blaſpheme
Each patriot? ſhall the hireling ſlave of faction—

ST. JUST.

I am of no one faction. I contend
Againſt all factions.

TALLIEN.

I eſpouſe the cauſe
Of truth. Robeſpierre on yeſter morn pronounced
Upon his own authority a report.
To-day St. Juſt comes down. St. Juſt neglects
What the committee orders, and harangues
From his own will. O citizens of France
I weep for you—I weep for my poor country—
I tremble for the cauſe of Liberty,
When individuals ſhall aſſume the ſway,
And with more inſolence than kingly pride
Rule the republic.

BILLAUD VARENNES.

Shudder, ye repreſentatives of France,
Shudder with horror. Henriot commands
The marſhall'd force of Paris. Henriot,
Foul parricide—the ſworn ally of Hebert
Denounced by all—upheld by Robeſpierre.
Who ſpar'd La Valette? who promoted him,
Stain'd with the deep die of nobility?
Who to an ex-peer gave the high command?
Who ſcreen'd from juſtice the rapacious thief?
Who caſt in chains the friends of Liberty?
Robeſpierre, the ſelf-ſtil'd patriot Robeſpierre—
Robeſpierre, allied with villain Daubigné—
Robeſpierre, the foul arch tyrant Robeſpierre.

BOURDON, L'OISE.

He talks of virtue—of morality—
Conſiſtent patriot! he Daubigné's friend!
Henriot's ſupporter virtuous! preach of virtue,
Yet league with villains, for with Robeſpierre
Villains alone ally. Thou art a tyrant!
I ſtile thee tyrant Robeſpierre!

(Loud applauſes.)

ROBESPIERRE.

Take back the name. Ye citizens of France—

(Violent clamour. Cries of—Down with the Tyrant!)

TALLIEN.

Oppreſſion falls. The traitor ſtands appall'd—
Guilt's iron fangs engraſp his ſhrinking ſoul—
He hears aſſembled France denounce his crimes!
He ſees the maſk torn from his ſecret ſins——
He trembles on the precipice of fate.
Fall'n guilty tyrant! murder'd by thy rage
How many an innocent victim's blood has ſtain'd
Fair freedom's altar! Sylla-like thy hand
Mark'd down the virtues, that, thy foes removed,
Perpetual Dictator thou might'ſt reign,
And tyrannize o'er France, and call it freedom!
Long time in timid guilt the traitor plann'd
His fearful wiles—ſucceſs emboldened ſin—
And his ſtretch'd arm had graſp'd the diadem
Ere now, but that the coward's heart recoil'd,
Leſt France awak'd, ſhould rouſe her from her dream,
And call aloud for vengeance. He, like Cæſar,
With rapid ſtep urged on his bold career,
Even to the ſummit of ambitious power,
And deem'd the name of King alone was wanting.
Was it for this we hurl'd proud Capet down?
Is it for this we wage eternal war
Againſt the tyrant horde of murderers,

The crowned cockatrices whoſe foul venom
Infects all Europe? was it then for this
We ſwore to guard our liberty with life,
That Robeſpierre ſhould reign? the ſpirit of freedom
Is not yet ſunk ſo low. The glowing flame
That animates each honeſt Frenchman's heart
Not yet extinguiſh'd. I invoke thy ſhade,
Immortal Brutus! I too wear a dagger;
And if the repreſentatives of France,
Through fear or favor ſhould delay the ſword
Of juſtice, Tallien emulates thy virtues;
Tallien, like Brutus, lifts the avenging arm;
Tallien ſhall ſave his country.

(Violent applauſes.)

BILLAUD VARENNES.

I demand
The arreſt of all the traitors. Memorable
Will be this day for France.

ROBESPIERRE.

Yes! Memorable
This day will be for France——for villains triumph.

LEBAS.

I will not ſhare in this day's damning guilt.
Condemn me too.

(Great cry—Down with the Tyrants!)

(The two Robeſpierres, Couthon, St. Juſt, *and* Lebas *are led off.)*

ACT III.

SCENE Continues.

COLLOT D'HERBOIS.

Cæſar is fallen! The baneful tree of Java,
Whoſe death-diſtilling boughs dropt poiſonous dew,
Is rooted from its baſe. This worſe than Cromwell,
The auſtere, the ſelf denying Robeſpierre,
Even in this hall, where once with terror mute
We liſtened to the hypocrite's harangues,
Has heard his doom.

BILLAUD VARENNES.

Yet muſt we not ſuppoſe
The tyrant will fall tamely. His ſworn hireling
Henriot, the daring deſperate Henriot
Commands the force of Paris. I denounce him.

FRERON.

I denounce Fluriot too, the mayor of Paris.

Enter DUBOIS CRANCE.

DUBOIS CRANCE.

Robeſpierre is reſcued. Henriot at the head
Of the arm'd force has reſcued the fierce tyrant.

COLLOT D'HERBOIS.

Ring the tocſin—call all the citizens
To ſave their country—never yet has Paris
Forſook the repreſentatives of France.

TALLIEN.

It is the hour of danger. I propoſe
This ſitting be made permanent.

(Loud applauſes.)

COLLOT D'HERBOIS.

The national Convention ſhall remain
Firm at its poſt.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Robeſpierre has reach'd the Commune. They eſpouſe
The tyrant's cauſe. St. Juſt is up in arms!
St. Juſt—the young ambitious bold St. Juſt
Harangues the mob. The ſanguinary Couthon
Thirſts for your blood.

(Tocſin rings.)

TALLIEN.

Theſe tyrants are in arms againſt the law:
Outlaw the rebels.

Enter MERLIN OF DOUAY.

MERLIN.

Health to the repreſentatives of France!
I paſt this moment through the armed force—
They aſk'd my name—and when they heard a delegate,
Swore I was not the friend of France.

COLLOT D'HERBOIS.

The tyrants threaten us as when they turn'd
The cannon's mouth on Briſſot.

Enter another MESSENGER.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Vivier harangues the Jacobins—the club
Eſpouſe the cauſe of Robeſpierre.

Enter another MESSENGER.

THIRD MESSENGER.

All's loſt—the tyrant triumphs. Henriot leads
The ſoldiers to his aid.——Already I hear
The rattling cannon deſtin'd to ſurround
This ſacred hall.

TALLIEN.

Why, we will die like men then.
The repreſentatives of France dare death,
When duty ſteels their boſoms.

(Loud applauſes.)

TALLIEN *addreſſing the galleries.*

Citizens!
France is inſulted in her delegates—
The majeſty of the republic is inſulted—
Tyrants are up in arms. An armed force
Threats the Convention. The Convention ſwears
To die, or ſave the country!

(Violent applauſes from the galleries.)

CITIZEN *from above.*

We too ſwear
To die, or ſave the country. Follow me.

(All the men quit the galleries.)

Enter another MESSENGER.

FOURTH MESSENGER.

Henriot is taken!—

(Loud applauſes.)

Henriot is taken. Three of your brave ſoldiers
Swore they would ſeize the rebel ſlave of tyrants,
Or periſh in the attempt. As he patroll'd
The ſtreets of Paris, ſtirring up the mob,
They ſeiz'd him.

(Applauſes.)

BILLAUD VARENNES.

Let the names of theſe brave men
Live to the future day.

Enter BOURDON L'OISE *ſword in hand.*

BOURDON L'OISE.

I have clear'd the Commune.

(Applauſes.)

Through the throng I ruſh'd,
Brandiſhing my good ſword to drench its blade
Deep in the tyrant's heart. The timid rebels
Gave way. I met the ſoldiery—I ſpake
Of the dictator's crimes—of patriots chain'd
In dark deep dungeons by his lawleſs rage—
Of knaves ſecure beneath his foſtering power,
I ſpake of Liberty. Their honeſt hearts
Caught the warm flame. The general ſhout burſt forth,
"Live the Convention—Down with Robeſpierre!"

(Applauſes.)

(Shouts from without—Down with the tyrant!)

TALLIEN.

I hear, I hear the ſoul-inſpiring ſounds,
France ſhall be ſaved! her generous ſons attached

To principles, not perſons, ſpurn the idol
They worſhipp'd once. Yes, Robeſpierre ſhall fall
As Capet fell! Oh! never let us deem
That France ſhall crouch beneath a tyrant's throne,
That the almighty people who have broke
On their oppreſſors heads the oppreſſive chain,
Will court again their fetters! eaſier were it
To hurl the cloud-capt mountain from its baſe,
Than force the bonds of ſlavery upon men
Determined to be free!

(Applauſes.)

Enter LEGENDRE—*A piſtol in one hand. Keys in the other.*

LEGENDRE. *Flinging down the keys.*
So—let the mutinous Jacobins meet now
In the open air.

(Loud applauſes.)

A factious turbulent party
Lording it o'er the ſtate ſince Danton died,
And with him the Cordeliers.—A hireling band
Of loud-tongued orators controull'd the club,
And bade them bow the knee to Robeſpierre.
Vivier has 'ſcap'd me. Curſe his coward heart—
This fate-fraught tube of Juſtice in my hand
I ruſh'd into the hall. He mark'd mine eye
That beam'd its patriot anger, and flaſh'd full
With death-denouncing meaning. 'Mid the throng
He mingled. I purſued—but ſtaid my hand,
Leſt haply I might ſhed the innocent blood.

(Applauſes.)

FRERON.
They took from me my ticket of admiſſion—
Expell'd me from their ſittings.—Now, forſooth,
Humbled and trembling re-inſert my name.

But Freron enters not the club again
'Till it be purg'd of guilt—'till, purified
Of tyrants and of traitors, honeſt men
May breathe the air in ſafety.

(Shouts from without.)

BARRERE.

What means this uproar! if the tyrant band
Should gain the people once again to riſe—
We are as dead!

TALLIEN.

And wherefore fear we death?
Did Brutus fear it? or the Grecian friends
Who buried in Hipparchus breaſt the ſword,
And died triumphant? Cæſar ſhould fear death,
Brutus muſt ſcorn the bugbear.

(Shouts from without. Live the Convention—Down with the Tyrants!)

TALLIEN.

Hark! again
The ſounds of honeſt Freedom!

Enter DEPUTIES *from the* SECTIONS.

CITIZEN.

Citizens! repreſentatives of France!
Hold on your ſteady courſe. The men of Paris
Eſpouſe your cauſe. The men of Paris ſwear
They will defend the delegates of Freedom.

TALLIEN.

Hear ye this, Colleagues? hear ye this, my brethren?
And does no thrill of joy pervade your breaſts?
My boſom bounds to rapture. I have ſeen

The ſons of France ſhake off the tyrant yoke;
I have, as much as lies in mine own arm,
Hurl'd down the uſurper.—Come death when it will
I have lived long enough.

(Shouts without.)

BARRERE.

Hark! how the noiſe increaſes! through the gloom
Of the ſtill evening—harbinger of death
Rings the tocſin! the dreadful generale
Thunders through Paris—

(Cry without—Down with the Tyrant!)

Enter LECOINTRE.

LECOINTRE.

So may eternal juſtice blaſt the foes
Of France! ſo periſh all the tyrant brood,
As Robeſpierre has periſhed! Citizens,
Cæſar is taken.

(Loud and repeated applauſes.)

I marvel not, that with ſuch fearleſs front,
He braved our vengeance, and with angry eye
Scowled round the hall defiance. He relied
On Henriot's aid—the Commune's villain friendſhip,
And Henriot's *boughten* ſuccours. Ye have heard
How Henriot reſcued him—how with open arms
The Commune welcom'd in the rebel tyrant—
How Fluriot aided, and ſeditious Vivier
Stirr'd up the Jacobins. All had been loſt—
The repreſentatives of France had periſh'd—
Freedom had ſunk beneath the tyrant arm
Of this foul parricide, but that her ſpirit
Inſpir'd the men of Paris. Henriot call'd
"To arms" in vain, whilſt Bourdon's patriot voice
Breath'd eloquence, and o'er the Jacobins

Legendre frown'd diſmay. The tyrants fled—
They reach'd the Hotel. We gather'd round—we call'd
For vengeance! Long time, obſtinate in deſpair
With knives they hack'd around them. 'Till foreboding
The ſentence of the law, the clamorous cry
Of joyful thouſands hailing their deſtruction,
Each ſought by ſuicide to eſcape the dread
Of death. Lebas ſucceeded. From the window
Leapt the younger Robeſpierre, but his fractur'd limb
Forbade to eſcape. The ſelf-will'd dictator
Plung'd often the keen knife in his dark breaſt,
Yet impotent to die. He lives all mangled
By his own tremulous hand! All gaſh'd and gored
He lives to taſte the bitterneſs of death.
Even now they meet their doom. The bloody Couthon,
The fierce St. Juſt, even now attend their tyrant
To fall beneath the axe. I ſaw the torches
Flaſh on their viſages a dreadful light—
I ſaw them whilſt the black blood roll'd adown
Each ſtern face, even then with dauntleſs eye
Scowl round contemptuous, dying as they lived,
Fearleſs of fate!

(Loud and repeated applauſes.)

BARRERE *mounts the Tribune.*

For ever hallowed be this glorious day,
When Freedom, burſting her oppreſſive chain,
Tramples on the oppreſſor. When the tyrant
Hurl'd from his blood-cemented throne, by the arm
Of the almighty people, meets the death
He plann'd for thouſands. Oh! my ſickening heart
Has ſunk within me, when the various woes
Of my brave country crowded o'er my brain
In ghaſtly numbers—when aſſembled hordes

Dragg'd from their hovels by deſpotic power
Ruſh'd o'er her frontiers, plunder'd her fair hamlets,
And ſack'd her populous towns, and drench'd with
blood
The reeking fields of Flanders.—When within,
Upon her vitals prey'd the rankling tooth
Of treaſon ; and oppreſſion, giant form,
Trampling on freedom, left the alternative
Of ſlavery, or of death. Even from that day,
When, on the guilty Capet, I pronounced
The doom of injured France, has faction reared
Her hated head amongſt us. Roland preach'd
Of mercy—the uxorious dotard Roland,
The woman-govern'd Roland durſt aſpire
To govern France ; and Petion talk'd of virtue,
And Vergniaud's eloquence, like the honeyed tongue
Of ſome ſoft Syren wooed us to deſtruction.
We triumphed over theſe. On the ſame ſcaffold
Where the laſt Louis pour'd his guilty blood,
Fell Briſſot's head, the womb of darkſome treaſons,
And Orleans, villain kinſman of the Capet,
And Hebert's atheiſt crew, whoſe maddening hand
Hurl'd down the altars of the living God,
With all the infidels intolerance.
The laſt worſt traitor triumphed—triumph'd long,
Secur'd by matchleſs villainy. By turns
Defending and deſerting each accomplice
As intereſt prompted. In the goodly ſoil
Of Freedom, the foul tree of treaſon ſtruck
Its deep-fix'd roots, and dropt the dews of death
On all who ſlumbered in its ſpecious ſhade.
He wove the web of treachery. He caught
The liſtening crowd by his wild eloquence,
His cool ferocity that perſuaded murder,
Even whilſt it ſpake of mercy !—never, never
Shall this regenerated country wear

The deſpot yoke. Though myriads round aſſail,
And with worſe fury urge this new cruſade
Than ſavages have known; though the leagued deſpots
Depopulate all Europe, ſo to pour
The accumulated maſs upon our coaſts,
Sublime amid the ſtorm ſhall France ariſe,
And like the rock amid ſurrounding waves
Repel the ruſhing ocean.—She ſhall wield
The thunder-bolt of vengeance—ſhe ſhall blaſt
The deſpot's pride, and liberate the world!

FINIS.